

Conflict Management

*How to recognize and work productively
with differences*

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Conflict Management

How to recognize and work productively with differences

- Conflict is neither good nor bad . . .

It's inevitable!

- All unresolved conflict weakens relationships
- All unresolved conflict decreases productivity & lowers performance

Most conflicts are . . .

- Minor
- Easily handled
- Overlooked *(without harm to people and issues)*
- Avoidable! *(if)*
 - *Courtesies are extended*
 - *Explanations are provided*
 - *a service oriented behavior/attitude is displayed*
- Time bound

Conflict can be . . .

- Difference of opinion or approach
- Competing interests & goals
- To further hidden agendas
- Value conflicts
- Unclear/unspoken
- Space needs - *“Keep your distance”*
 - *“Do not disturb - refueling!”*

Constructive fighting is a skill which:

- Reduces tension & frustration
- Live with fewer inhibitions and no lies
- Enhances teamwork
- Free to grow - become more productive, creative
- Perform better
- Feel less guilty about negative emotions
- Face fewer unpleasant surprises
- Improves communication
- Worry less about the past which cannot be changed
- Feel less vulnerable

Positive effects of conflict . . .

- Raises different points of view
- Surfaces innovative
- Hones ideas that need development
- Taps the resources of all participants

Symptoms of underlying conflict

Individual

- Avoidance
 - *absenteeism, hiding out, yes-ing the boss*
 - *self-centeredness*
 - *hiding behind the rules*
- Repression
 - *ill health, escapist drinking, irregular productivity, low satisfaction, irritability*
- Reactive
 - *flashes of anger, non-cooperation, rumors*
 - *stealing and destruction, counter organizations, strikes*

Symptoms of underlying conflict

Inter-Group

- Competition
- Rigidity
- Appeals to superiors for decisions
- Decreased rate of interaction
- Low trust
- Suspicion
- Hostility

Conflict vs. Job Performance

- Productivity is GREATEST with a MODERATE amount of conflict.
- Productivity is LOWEST when:
 - There is no conflict (laissez-faire attitude)
 - There is too much conflict (high anxiety, tension)
- Bell shaped curve

Common but unhealthy

- Kitchen Sink Fighting
- Laundry List
- Mt. Vesuvius

Conflict resolution strategies

- Avoidance

- *repress emotions*
- *look the other way*
- *run, quit, etc.*

- Defusion

- *downplay*
- *cool off*

- Confrontation

- *power and force*
- *negotiation*

Conflict Resolution

- **Compromise**

- *Neither party gets everything he or she wants, but gets something.*
- *Each gives up something. Often quite satisfactory to each.*
- **This resolution is “part-way” for each.**

- **Capitulation**

- *One partner gives in to what the other wants. This works well when the issue is relatively unimportant to one partner.*
- **This resolution is “one way.”**

Conflict Resolution

- **Co-existence**

- *Partners agree to disagree.*
- **This resolution is “both ways.”**

- **Collaboration**

- *Partners work together to understand the real issues behind the difference and search for a resolution that meets the needs of both.*
- **This resolution is “both ways.”**

Conflict Styles

1. **Placator** - *Yield-lose*

low personal goals, high relationship goals

2. **Detached** - *Lose-leave*

low personal goals, low relationship goals

3. **Tough Battler** - *Win-lose*

high personal goals, low relationship goals

4. **Problem Solver** - *Win-win*

high personal goals, high relationship goals

How a fight escalates

**Issue --> Personality -->
Relationship**

- 1. Fight over a specific issue**
escalates to
- 2. Personality level**
which escalates to
- 3. Relationship level**
“I want a divorce!”

Healthy fighting techniques

- Choose what conflicts to address and what to let go
- Stick to the subject
- Deal in potential, not the past
- Don't use the "silent treatment"
- Attack the problem, not the other
- Never say "*you never*" or "*you always*"
- Offer solutions with constructive criticism
- Don't try to force the other person to be your carbon copy
- Be humble - you could be wrong
- Be willing to apologize
- Let the conflict end when it's over

Bad fighting techniques

- **uninvited character analysis**
- **stereotyping**
- **let down partner's expectations**
- **change the subject**
- **attack your partner's Achilles' Heel**
- **passive aggressive styles**
- **create disorder --> crisis maker**
- **physical force - never acceptable**

Sample technique for confronting

1. Set a time & place to talk
2. State your intentions & expectations for the outcome of this meeting
3. State the event
4. State your feelings about the event & end your statement with a question

Sample technique for confronting

5. Explore all relevant information

- facts
- interpretations
- feelings

6. Repeat your partner's view of the event

7. Explore solutions that would satisfy both of you

8. Offer "*fair exchange*" proposals

9. Test your agreement & commitment *"Give it a try"*

Fair Fighting Techniques

1. **Timing** - *set aside a time to discuss the issues*
2. **Stick to the issue**
3. **Choose flexible terms**
4. **Be realistic**
5. **Be responsible**
6. **Affirm your spouse**
7. **Don't analyze**
8. **Be supportive**
9. **Take time limited cooling off periods**
10. **Compromise**
11. **Don't manipulate**
12. **Avoid money-control tactics**
13. **Model behavior you want your children to adopt**
14. **Be consistent**
15. **Practice**

Dirty Fighting Techniques

1. **Timing** - *pick the wrong time and place*
2. **Escalation**
3. **Brown bagging**
4. **Over generalize**
5. **Cross-complain**
6. **Interrupt your partner**
7. **Ask why**
8. **Blame**
9. **Pull rank**
10. **Don't listen, dominate**
11. **List injustices**
12. **Label**
13. **Mind read**
14. **Fortune-telling**
15. **Sarcasm**
16. **Avoid responsibility**
17. **Leave**
18. **Reject compromise**
19. **Personalize**
20. **Play the martyr**
21. **Use money**
22. **Use children**
23. **Use relatives**
24. **Give advice**
25. **Get even**
26. **Use terminal language**
27. **Be inconsistent**
28. **Harbor grudges**

In Summary

Conflict management is an
ART
which can be learned.